

Marks of Discipleship

Daily Prayer ■ Weekly Worship ■ Bible Reading
Giving Time, Talents & Resources
Spiritual Friendships ■ Service In & Beyond the Church

August 22, 2021

Day 1: Galatians 5:13

For you were called to freedom, brothers and sisters; only do not use your freedom as an opportunity for self-indulgence, but through love become slaves to one another.

Paul goes to great lengths to show that the promise of salvation came through Abraham and Sarah's child, Isaac. Isaac's birth was God's choice, not Abraham and Sarah's. Isaac did not ask to inherit the promise nor did he do anything to earn it.

Question: What do you see as the difference between freedom and self-indulgence?

Challenge: Taking a loose definition of "slaves to one another," who are you a slave to through love?

Scripture: Romans 12:9-21, 13:8-10

Day 2: Galatians 5:14-15

For the whole law is summed up in a single commandment, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' If, however, you bite and devour one another, take care that you are not consumed by one another.

Paul is saying that the whole Law was brought to fulfillment in one saying -*You shall love your neighbor as yourself*. In Jesus the Law has been brought to fulfillment. Jesus brought the Law to fulfillment by His teaching and His sacrificial death. Paul warns against being antagonistic toward each other. We cannot turn our antagonism off and on. If we are angry and treating others with contempt then it will spill over into our close relationships.

Question: Where in the New Testament does Jesus use this phrase?

Challenge: Find where in the Old Testament this saying is found.

Scripture: 1 Thessalonians 4:9-18

Day 3: Galatians 5:16

Live by the Spirit, I say, and do not gratify the desires of the flesh. For what the flesh desires is opposed to the Spirit, and what the Spirit desires is opposed to the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you want.

I believe there are two basic ways to live a moral and ethical life. One is to avoid doing wrong by organizing one's life so that bad choices are avoided. One can try to make the world around them safe from temptations. The other is to be actively involved in doing good things. One organizes their life so that they can help make life more abundant for those around them. Paul is telling the church to walk with the Spirit (the Spirit of Christ who loved us and gave His life for us). If we spend our time "walking" in the Spirit we will not have much time to gratify the desire of the flesh. The Spirit is life and the flesh is the fallen nature of humanity.

Question: What do you think are the desires of the flesh? Do not think in terms of sexuality.

Challenge: What are the top three principles that you base your moral decisions upon?

Scripture: Ephesians 4:1-32

Day 4: Galatians 5:18-21

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not subject to the law. Now the works of the flesh are obvious: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, anger, quarrels, dissensions, factions, envy, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these. I am warning you, as I warned you before: those who do such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

The Spirit is not the human spirit but it is God's Spirit that came into the world through Christ's death and resurrection. The warfare between the flesh and the Spirit began with the advent of Jesus into the world. If we are in Christ we are of the Spirit and thereby involved in the war between Spirit and flesh. When we "walk in the Spirit" we will be opposed by the flesh. The list above identifies how the flesh will manifest itself in everyday life. The warning that if we do the things in vs. 19-20 we will not inherit the Kingdom does not have in mind a single instance of the items listed but over time if we participate in these attitudes we will not inherit. We ought not to spend our life avoiding the things above but to practice the fruit of the Spirit.

Question: Do you think Paul's warning is valid for someone who does understand what they are doing?

Challenge: Note in the media how many of the items listed above are found in the news.

Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:1-13

Day 5: Galatians 5:22-24

By contrast, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, generosity, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things. And those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires.

The Spirit produces a singular fruit. We are not advised to cultivate the various items above. If we have the mind of Christ we will see how they are exhibited in the community as the community walks in the Spirit. Paul is painting a picture of the harvest, not asking us to create the fruit. Only God can create the fruit; it is not humanly manufactured. As we walk in the Spirit the outside world will see the fruit and believe God is the one who brings forth the fruit. Paul believes that if we focus on Christ and the cross then the fruit will come. The fruit comes not as we try to produce the fruit but it comes naturally as we plant the seed of God's love in the world.

Question: Why do you think it is "fruit" and not "fruits" of the Spirit?

Challenge: The list above is not comprehensive but illustrative. What could you add to it that would make sense to our time now.

Scripture: Colossians 3:5-17

Day 6: Galatians 5:25

If we live by the Spirit, let us also be guided by the Spirit.

The Spirit has set us free from the power of sin to control our lives. Let us then be guided by the one who set us free. The God who set us free wants for us an abundant life and knows how we can obtain it.

Question: What is the difference between "live by" and being "guided by?"

Challenge: Would you say your life is guided by the Spirit of God? If so, how?

Scripture: John 4:7-21

Answers to challenge Day 2: Leviticus 19:18, Matthew 22:39, Mark 12:31